
Prostitution: An N.G.O. Perspective

Ruhama

Sarah Benson
CEO

About Ruhama

- **Established 1989**
- **Support to over 2000 women (including over 250 victims of trafficking)**

Ruhama Mission

- **Reach out to and provide support services to women affected by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation**
- **Based on individual need, to offer assistance and opportunities to explore alternatives to prostitution & recovery from sex trafficking.**
- **Work to change public attitudes, practices and policies which allow the exploitation of women & girls through prostitution.**

Ruhama provide support to:

- **Women actively involved in prostitution seeking to exit.**
- **Women actively involved in prostitution who are not seeking to exit.**
- **Women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation.**
- **Women with a past experience of prostitution & those vulnerable to entry.**

Organisational work

Lobbying

Awareness Raising

**Individual
1:1 support**



Advocacy

**Development
& Training**

**Referral to other
services**

Outreach Work

Overview of 2010 direct work with women

Ruhama supported a total of **204 women** in **2010**.

140 women supported in ***Casework***

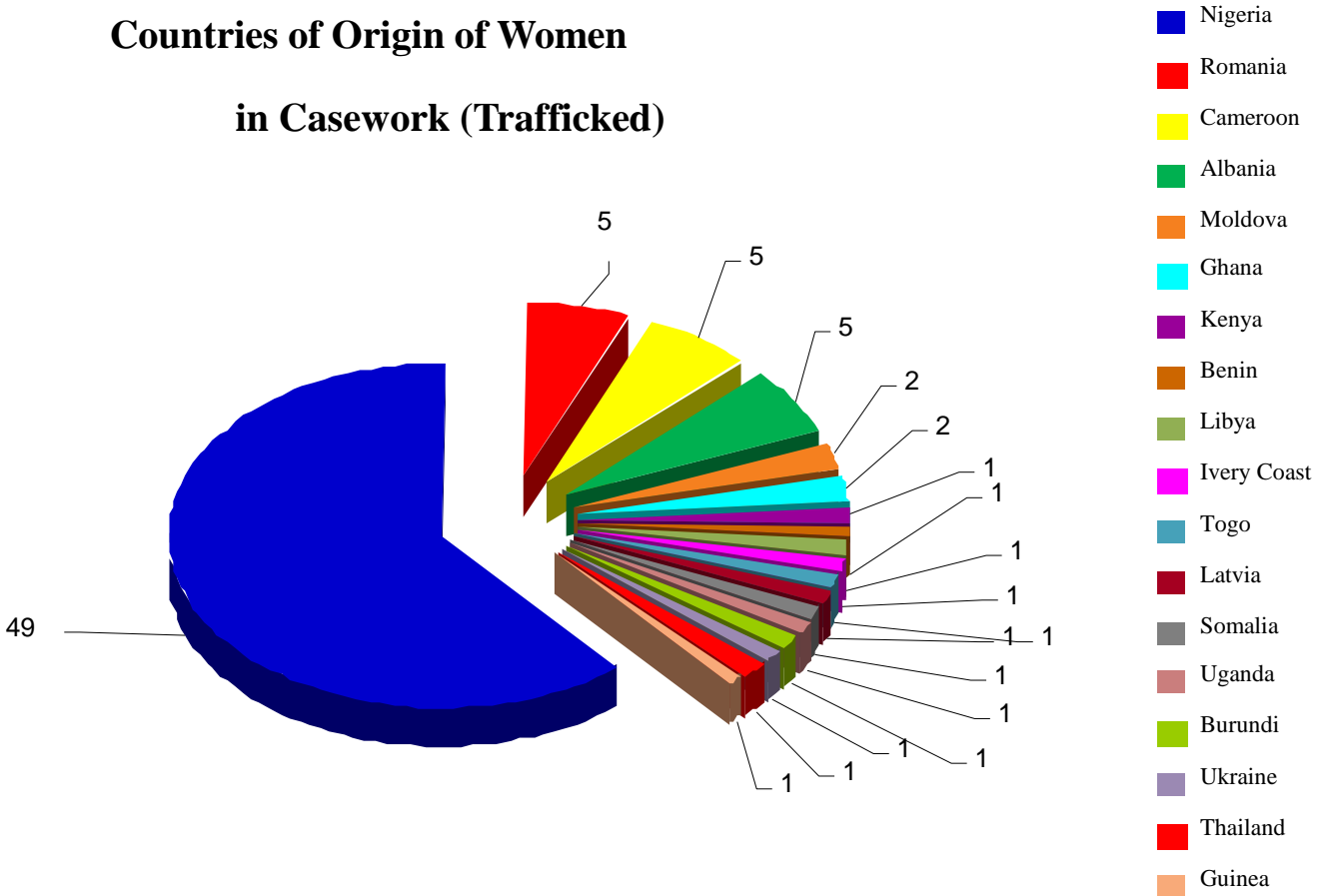
64 exclusively through ***Street Outreach***.

Women from Thirty One (31) different countries of origin

Countries of Origin - Casework Trafficked

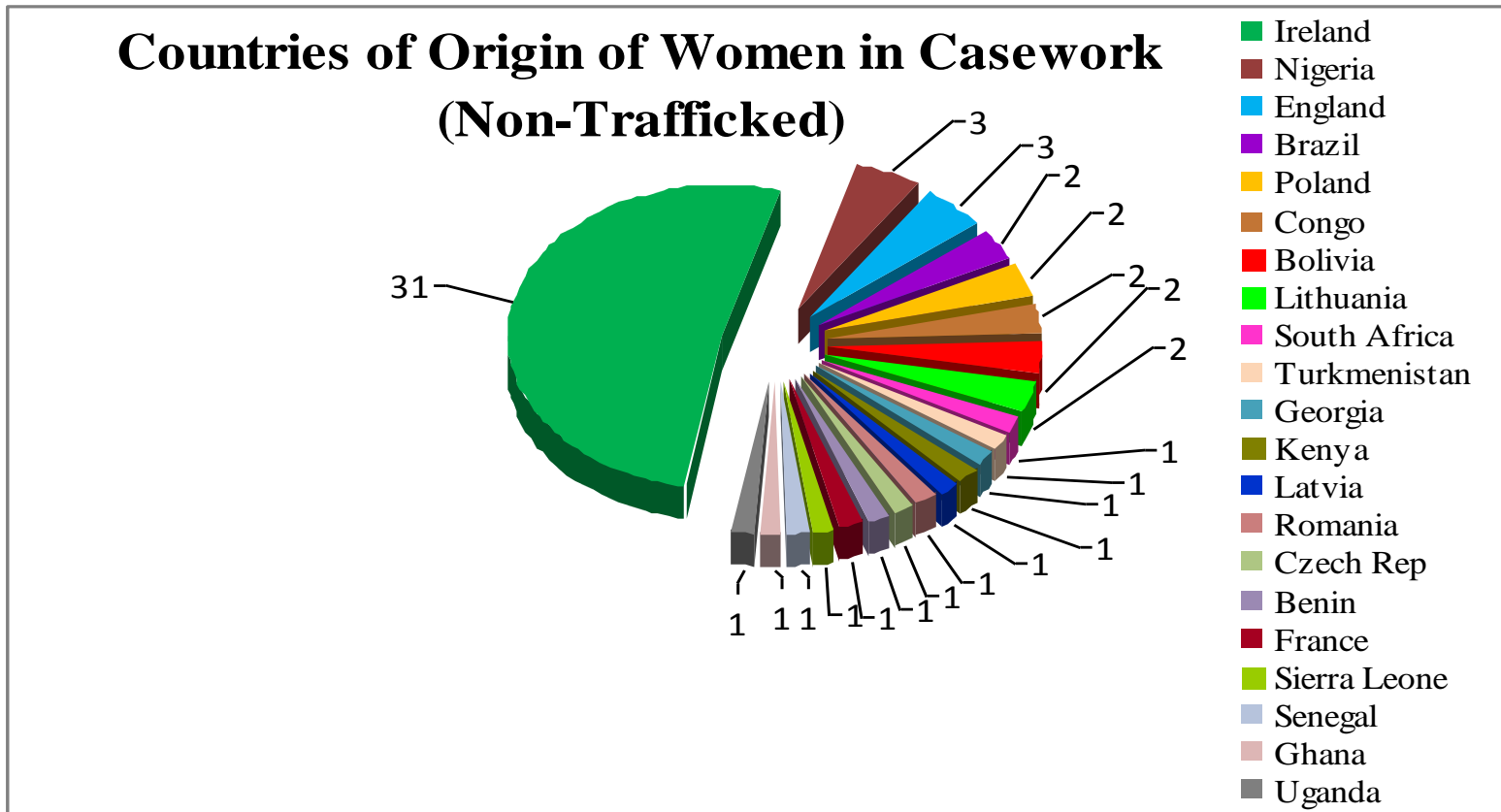
The 80 women who were supported in casework (**Trafficked**) in 2010, came from **18 different countries**. The majority came from **Nigeria (61%)**, with Romania, Cameroon, Albania, Moldova and Ghana the next significant cohort. Other women came from countries in Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia.

**Countries of Origin of Women
in Casework (Trafficked)**



Countries of Origin - Casework Not Trafficked

The 60 women in casework Non-Trafficked came from **21 different countries**. The majority came from **Ireland (52%)**, with Nigeria, England, Brazil, Poland, Congo, Congo, Bolivia and Lithuania following as the next largest cohort.



The Sex Trade in Ireland (ROI)

Sex trade is thriving and not just confined to major towns & cities
Estd. 1000 women and girls available indoors for purchase of sex daily.

Use of internet & mobile phone allows anonymity & invisibility

Now mostly indoors with fewer women in Street Prostitution.
Increased use of Apartments, brothels, massage parlours, lap dancing clubs...

Profile of the women involved has changed and this is leading to greater difficulty accessing

Increasing numbers of victims of sex trafficking – including Irish nationals & minors

Many Young Men inured to the exploitation involved:
Normalised activity.

Sex trade invest heavily in perpetuating myth of willing empowered participation to fund glamorous lifestyles

Control of sex trade by domestic and international crime gangs

Little awareness of the negative health consequences for those involved in prostitution (physical and mental)

Women involved in prostitution continue to be criminalised, marginalised and isolated.

Current Irish Legislation (ROI)

- Criminal law (Sexual Offences act 1993)
 - Soliciting or importuning in a public place
 - living off the earnings of prostitution
 - brothel keeping
- Criminal Law (Human Trafficking act 2008)
- Child trafficking and Pornography act (1998 to 2004)

Backdrop to entering prostitution

- Poverty
- Debt – small or large amounts
- History of abuse and/or severe neglect as a child or youth.
- Institutionalisation as a child (In care)
- Partner abuse
- Homelessness
- Lack of family supports
- Addiction
- Grooming/coercion (family, partner, “friend”)
- Background very similar to profile of women trafficked.

Trafficking: Mechanisms used

- Targeting of pre-existing vulnerability (Lack of supportive family, poverty, no education, abuse)
- Abduction
- Deception: “New better life”
- Debt Bondage
- Juju/Witchcraft
- Repeated assault: “breaking down”
- Threats to woman/woman’s family
- Lies (about police/laws/other women)
- Deportation threat
- Organised criminality – chain crossing borders

Impacts of prostitution

- Hepatitis, STI's, Infertility, unwanted pregnancy, HIV, Addiction, mental health (Depression, PTSD...)
- 71% Physical Assault*
- 80% Emotional/verbal Abuse*
- 68% Post traumatic stress disorder*
- 68% Reported Rape*
- 92% reported that they wanted to leave prostitution. *

*Nine Country Report (854 respondents), Farley *et al* (2003)

- Mortality rate of women in prostitution 40 times higher than national average. Canadian study, Baldwin (1992) (1600 individuals)
- Netherlands: The Dutch expert (VAW at the UN) reported that there were at least 50 documented murders of prostituted women in the Netherlands between 1992 and 2004 (some in windows/brothels, several by pimps)

REFERRALS

Statutory Agencies

Gardai,
HSE,
Prison Services etc.

NGO's

Drugs, Homelessness
Migrant support groups etc.

Self Referrals and Prof's

Website, TV, newspapers
Solicitors, Doctors etc

Outreach

Outreach Van, Clinic,
talks, Prison etc.

Education and Development

Literacy, Math , Computers, STEPS,
Personal development courses,
Positive Body Image, Study Support,
Career Guidance, CV, Holistic
Therapies, Art etc.

Resettlement

Accommodation, Social Welfare,
Budgeting, Independent Living
Skills, accessing employment,
work placement etc.

Meets with Ruhama Caseworker

Assesses woman's needs and works
with her to put together a care plan

CARE PLAN



Counselling and Art Therapy

Outreach Van

A listening ear, hot drink, food,
information on and referrals to
caseworkers for addiction,
accommodation, social welfare
& other support...

Casework

Emotional Support, Accompaniment,
Advocacy, Supports women to access
services... Addiction, health, legal,
family support service, asylum process
etc

Awareness Raising and Policy

QUESTIONS

DATE: _____

Mental Health

Physical Health

Addiction

Fun

Employment

**Education and/
or Training**

Myself

Financial

Relationships

Environment

Family

**Accommodation
(Resettlement)**

**Legal Issues
(Immigration/criminal/
civil)**

Spiritual

Exiting: Triggers and actions

- A particular life changing experience. E.g. A violent attack, birth of a child...
- A gradual growing realisation of the negative impact of prostitution on health, relationships...(Physical and emotional demands taking toll)
- Awareness of other options/opportunities: training, emotional care, work...
- Changing mindset alongside behaviours
 - Interest/awareness of exiting as an option
 - Action/Engagement
 - Transition/breaking old patterns
 - Rebuilding/planning forward
 - New Identity

List of Barriers and Definitions

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Dependency | Drug or alcohol dependency |
| 2. Housing | Homeless or living in unsuitable accommodation |
| 3. Physical or mental health problems | Physical or mental health problems as reported by participants |
| 4. Experiences of childhood violence | Sexual, emotional, physical or verbal violence and abuse |
| 5. Criminal record | Criminal convictions relating to both prostitution or non-prostitution offences |
| 6. Debt | Personal debts of any amount |
| 7. Coercion | From partner, pimp, relative or other person |
| 8. No qualifications | No formal qualifications or training |
| 9. Age of entry into prostitution | Under 18 years / 18 years and over |
| 10. Disposable cash | Viewing income from prostitution as 'disposable cash' |
| 11. Victim of trafficking | As defined by the United Nations Palermo Protocol 2000 (section 3.a) |
| 12. Entrenchment | Prostitution is not simply a 'part' of the woman's identity but rather all aspects of her life are connected to her involvement. She finds it difficult to imagine a life where she is not involved in prostitution. Entrenchment may be signalled by a lengthy and habitual involvement, however, the duration of a woman's involvement is not the key consideration |

Additional barriers for Migrant women in Prostitution (inc victims of trafficking): Ruhama Experience

Some or all of the following can be factors:

- Lack of English Language skills
- Undocumented Migrant (No entitlement to social welfare/state training)
- In asylum system (No entitlement to social welfare/state training)
- Student Visa
- Dependent on abusive spouse/pimp for residency status

Amy – an escort's story

...I could say this was a choice, it was, a freely made one. However considering the background of rape and sexual abuse that lasted about three years, looking back, I can see how vulnerable I was and how I was emotionally not stable enough to be making that kind of 'choice'. I thought being a prostitute would help me regain my sexual power over men. I never had any control and I thought this was the answer, and a way to 'get back' at the man who raped me and the other man who manipulated me into being his plaything, basically. Also because of these experiences I had put all of myself worth into my sexuality and how I looked and judged myself on how much I attracted men.

...When I started escorting on my own, it felt okay at the beginning; I liked the feeling of being in 'control' of the men, and 'using' them for their money, but I soon started realising that my plan to be in control had backfired, that actually the men were in control and had the power, and they weren't afraid to show me that they were the ones in charge...They pressured me into doing things I didn't want to do by promising me more money. They used language that both made me want to please them and disgusted me at the same time.

...You could say that I could've stopped at any moment. That is true, but I didn't have the emotional tools to be able to stop. My past had the biggest hold on me and I hadn't even started processing it.

...Finally I had a punter that verged on behaving in an illegal way and it was the reality check I needed to stop properly. It was the worst I've ever been treated, but I'm glad it happened, because there were no lies I could tell myself about that encounter, there was no way to justify it, so I had to admit honestly to myself that the reality of the situation. To this man I wasn't even a human. I wasn't just 'unlucky', being treated like that was a daily threat and most of the punters treated me in a similar way.

...On the website I used to advertise on, the punters were often giving out about 'Ruhama', I had never heard of it before. I went on the Ruhama website and sent an email, within hours I got a phone call back and a couple of days later a phone call from a case worker to arrange to meet. I felt such relief to meet with her and talk to someone that truly understood my experience that I was nearly crying the entire time.

Key principles: Model of Work

- Supports which can facilitate exiting an integral part of the service not separate and distinct.
- Non-judgemental service (no requirements to exit, recognise re-entry not as a “failure”, building trust). Work with women wherever “they are at”.
- Led by the woman’s own priorities not those of the service.
- Collaborate on identifying meaningful and achievable goals to support confidence building.
- Review care plans regularly – flexibility
- Development/education tailored to individual needs: no “one size fits all” model.
- Understand exiting not a linear process for most women.
- “Wrap-around” model : Practical support combined with empathic emotional supports. Accessed to greater or lesser extent depending on individual needs, working towards complete independence of the service.

Collaborative working critical!

- Sexual Health /general health services: referral and outreach to clinics.
- Addiction services: mutual referral
- Migrant support services: Legal advice and advocacy.
- Social work services
- Gardai (Police)/Judiciary: Support to report crimes, through investigation, advocate where woman focus of a criminal charge.
- ...Others as required in individual cases

Quotes from women...

Independent evaluation of Ruhama model of work 2010

'When I came here I could not believe that someone could give you so much encouragement.. i thought is it a dream? They said it was not my fault what happened .. they said not to think you are nothing.... you can be somebody.'

'One to one support workers are just wonderful. I learned to trust and tell a little at a time of what happened to me. I was terrified at the beginning to say anything as have learned never to trust anyone or ask anyone for help.'

'I want to stay here, have a life here, study and get a job. But if I am sent back I feel at least after three and a half years I now have an education and a qualification that I bring back with me.'

'I could talk to my case worker about private issues, she was always there for me but the development team were there for all the practical things and help with the courses.'

'I think it was very important that the workers helped each women individually to keep progressing and to sort out what stage she was at and where she wanted to go.'

**“We, the survivors of prostitution and trafficking ...
Declare that prostitution is violence against women.
Women in prostitution do not wake up one day and
‘choose’ to be prostitutes. It is chosen for us by poverty,
past sexual abuse, the pimps who take advantage of our
vulnerabilities, and men who buy us for the sex of
prostitution.”**

***Manifesto of Survivors of Prostitution & Trafficking.* Press Conference, European Parliament, October 17th, 2005.**

Contact Ruhama

www.ruhama.ie

00353 1 836 0292

00353 86 3813783

Admin@ruhama.ie